



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School
1611 E Main St., Watertown, WI 53094
(920)261-2570
www.goodshepherdwi.org

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST September 7, 2014

“You, Lord, Are My Hiding Place”

(Psalm 32:5,7)

Rev. David K. Groth

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin. . . You are my hiding place” (Ps. 32:5, 7)

Collect of the Day

O God, from whom all good proceeds, grant to us, Your humble servants, Your holy inspiration, that we may set our minds on the things that are right and, by Your merciful guiding, accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

In the Bible, there are a lot of people looking for a place to hide. It begins with Adam and Eve. They haven't had much practice so they're not very good at it. They figure some bushes will hide them from God's searching eyes. "I was naked" Adam informs God, "and so I hid myself."

Flesh gives birth to flesh. Evil spreads down through the generations. Hiding becomes a survival instinct. The new-born infant Moses is hidden from Pharaoh. Jacob hides from Esau. David hides from Saul. The infant Jesus is hidden from Herod. The disciples hide behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. The early Christians hide among the catacombs.

Sometimes you and I hide from the assaults of others. Sometimes you and I cause others to hide. We drive them to their hiding place with ill chosen words or hurtful decisions. In turn, sometimes guilt and shame drive us to hide.

Often our hiding places aren't so healthy. They don't serve us well at all. If drinking becomes your hiding place, all kinds of trouble will find you there. And if heroin becomes your hiding place, your family, your job, your money, your body, mind, your very soul, they will not be hidden, but laid bare, made vulnerable, put up for grabs.

Some of you grew up during the Cold War, under the threat of nuclear attack, and you were taught at school the "duck and cover" drill for your protection. Immediately after seeing the nuclear flash, you should stop and get on the ground under a table or desk, face down, covering any exposed skin, especially your neck and head with your hands or a coat. At school you were taught how to hide from the nuclear blast under your wooden desk, and even as little children you recognized the inadequacies of that hiding place.

Many of our hiding places are equally inadequate. Sometimes, like Adam and Eve, we think we can even hide from God. We submit to him and anyone else listening that it wasn't our fault. Or we assume God isn't bothered by our little indiscretions. After all, he has bigger fish to fry. Just when we should flee to him, we flee from him. Just when we should lay everything out on the table, openly and candidly, just when we should confess to him our faults and failures, that is precisely when we often look for the modern fig leaves with which to cloak our shame.

We're no better at hiding from God than Adam was, and God is no less perceptive. In Jeremiah, he asks, "Am I only a God nearby and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth" (Jer. 23:23-24)?

In the book "Giants of the Earth" by Ole Edvart Rolvaag, the author talks about how the early settlers in America were startled by the vast size and emptiness of the mid western prairies – no homes, no hills, no trees, just mile after mile of uninterrupted prairie. They saw very few birds, or other animals. Rolvaag writes, "If life is to thrive and endure, it must at least have something to hide behind." So it is in a sinful world. . . if life is to thrive and endure, it must have something to hide behind. But the usual hiding places aren't going to work when contending with sin and death and the devil. There's no bunker or bomb shelter deep enough to hide away from those enemies.

King David, the author of our psalm knew that. "When I kept silent" he writes . . . that is when I failed or refused to confess my sin "my bones wasted away. . . . For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up." Then, "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin . . . You are my hiding place."

As King of Israel, David had all kinds of potential hiding places to which he could flee. . . cool, quiet little corners of the palace, remote havens in the countryside, ancient places of heavily guarded respite. Yet David

dismisses all these as inadequate and says, “You, Lord, are my hiding place.” David knew there was, (is) no better hiding place, for anyone, even for a king. David knew the Lord is the only hiding place to which a sinner can flee. David confessed, “Against you, and you only Lord, have I sinned and done what is evil.” That’s a spiritual problem, right? And spiritual problems demand spiritual solutions. Spiritual problems are not fixed by raiding the refrigerator or by drinking one glass of wine after another. Spiritual problems are not fixed by working and playing so hard that you have no time to think.

Spiritual problems demand spiritual solutions. Christ on the cross is the Lord’s solution for our spiritual problems. On the cross there’s no place for God’s Son to hide. He cannot duck and cover to hide himself from the white hot flash of God’s atoning justice. On the cross, Jesus is not lying low; he’s up high and sprawled out . . . nearly naked, exposed to the hellish punishment for our sin. Loaded with our sin even the Son of God succumbs to sin’s wages. Jesus gave up his hiding place in heaven, so that you and I might hide in him, and live. As the old hymn says, “Within your deep wounds hiding, I there find full salvation and freedom from damnation” (LW 255, v.2).

The Lord is your hiding place. You have no other. No one can hide a sinner like the Lord can. If you try hiding anywhere else, sin, death and the devil will find you there. Only in Christ are you safe. What you need most to survive this world and into the next is a hiding place and that’s precisely what Jesus won for you on the cross. Hide yourself in him; be hidden within him.

Looking over the capital city, Jesus wept and said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those I sent to you, how often I have yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, (to hide them), but you would not.” Did you hear it? The Lord *yearns* to be your hiding place. He doesn’t resent you or your need to hide behind him. He loves you and yearns to be your hiding place.

He is the only hiding place to which a sinner can flee. Even when we are full of sin, even when we, because of our sin, are the ones causing others to hide, the Lord still invites us to use him as our hiding place. When we seek forgiveness from those against whom we have sinned, we may or may not receive it. Seek it anyway. But when you seek forgiveness from the Lord, you will know with a certainty that you have received it when you taste that bread and wine, that body and blood, in your mouth, for he promises it is there for you, for your forgiveness. He hides himself not from sinners but for us, in with and under the bread and wine. And you know you will have received his forgiveness when you hear with your ears, “in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you” for he promised to his church, “Whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven.” And you know you are his beloved and redeemed child because you are baptized. In baptism you were hidden, covered up by Christ’s cloak of righteousness.

At the start of the Second World War, Germany launched a bombing campaign against Britain. In London, when the air raid sirens sounded many citizens fled to the Underground, London’s subway system. Deep down in the tunnels they were safe from the bombs and shrapnel, safe from the collapsing buildings and the raging fires. They knew they were safe; they were down so deep that the deafening fury of those bombs was reduced to a distant rumble. Parties erupted in the Underground . . . rather spontaneously. People sang. Big bands continued below where they had left off up above. The din of the bombs couldn’t even be heard over the music and singing.

If you had been there and had known about the safety of the Underground, don’t you think you would have made sure your family and friends and neighbors knew too? Don’t you think you would have said, “Don’t bother with any other hiding place, because wherever it is, you’ll still be vulnerable there. Let me show you a better way, a better place, where it’s so safe that we celebrate and sing.

The Lord's Church is a hiding place where we celebrate and sing, even though the devil still rages in the world. Don't neglect to tell others about this hiding place, for there is lots of room and welcome for sinners here. Jesus said, "A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and [hide] it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light so shine before men" (Mt. 5:14). When most people come to a church for the first time, they usually don't come on their own steam. They come because someone invited them. Everyone needs a hiding place, and many already recognize the inadequacies of their usual hiding places. Often a simple invitation from you, someone they know and respect, is all that is needed.

The Lord is your hiding place, and he yearns to be a hiding place for others as well. The Lord is your cleft in the rock. He is your ark on rough seas. He is your shelter from the stormy blast. He is the cloak of righteousness that covers you. He is your fortress, your shield, your refuge. He is the outstretched wing over your head. He is your hiding place, the only one, and he will remain your hiding place until heaven itself shall hide you. Amen.

Let us pray: O Lord Jesus Christ, the birds have their nests, the foxes their holes, and you had no place to lay your head, no place to hide. In many ways you were homeless upon earth, yet you were a hiding place for sinners. And so today you are still our hiding place. When as sinners we flee to you, hide ourselves in you, are hidden in you, then we are eternally defended, then love covers over and hides a multitude of sins. All praise be to you. Amen.

